

What is claimed is:

1. In a baseball videogame, wherein animated action is performed by a pitcher character in response to input by a user provided through a user-operable controller, a method of controlling game play comprising:

monitoring for user input on the user-operable controller requesting release of a baseball pitch by the pitcher character;

detecting when user input is requested on the user-operable controller requesting release of the baseball pitch by the pitcher character;

comparing a time at which the user input is detected to an optimal pitch release timing; and

controlling a timing of a break on the baseball pitch based on the comparison.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the timing of the break on the baseball pitch occurs relatively early in its flight when the time at which the user input is detected occurs earlier than the optimal pitch release timing.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the timing of the break on the baseball pitch occurs relatively late in its flight when the time at which the user input is detected occurs at or during the optimal pitch release timing.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the timing of the break on the baseball pitch will result in the pitch being outside of a batter character's strike zone when the time at which the user input is detected occurs after the optimal pitch release timing.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the optimal pitch release timing is a period of time.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein the amount of time in the period of time forming the optimal pitch timing is variable.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the amount of time in the period of time is varied based on performance statistics of the pitcher character.

8. The method of claim 6 wherein the amount of time in the period of time is varied based on a type of pitch selected by input on the user-operable controller that controls the action performed by the pitcher character.

9. A method of controlling game play in a baseball videogame, wherein a user interactively controls a pitcher character in response to input by a user provided through a user-operable controller, the method comprising:

monitoring for user input on the user-operable controller requesting release of a baseball pitch by the pitcher character;

detecting when user input is requested on the user-operable controller requesting release of the baseball pitch by the pitcher character;

comparing a time at which the user input is detected to an optimal pitch release timing; and

controlling when a break on the baseball pitch occurs during its flight based on the comparison.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the break on the baseball pitch occurs relatively early in its flight when the time at which the user input is detected occurs earlier than the optimal pitch release timing.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the break on the baseball pitch occurs relatively late in its flight when the time at which the user input is detected occurs at or during the optimal pitch release timing.

12. The method of claim 9 wherein the break on the baseball pitch will result in the pitch being outside of a batter character's strike zone if the time at which the user input is detected occurs after the optimal pitch release timing.

13. The method of claim 9 wherein the optimal pitch release timing is a period of time.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein an amount of time in the period of time forming the optimal pitch timing is variable.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein the amount of time in the period of time is varied based on performance statistics of the pitcher character.

16. The method of claim 14 wherein the amount of time in the period of time is varied based on a type of pitch selected by input on the user-operable controller that controls the action performed by the pitcher character.

17. In a baseball videogame, wherein animated action is performed by a pitcher baseball game character in response to input by a user provided through a user-operable controller, a method of controlling game play comprising:

displaying and activating a pitch release meter so that the pitch release meter approaches a target;

monitoring for user input on the user-operable controller requesting release of a baseball pitch by the pitcher character;

detecting the position of the release meter when user input is requested on the user-operable controller requesting release of the baseball pitch by the pitcher character;

comparing the detected position of the release meter to the target; and

controlling when a break on the baseball pitch occurs during its flight based on the comparison.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein the break on the baseball pitch occurs relatively early in its flight if the detected position of the release meter has not yet reached the target.

19. The method of claim 17 wherein the break on the baseball pitch occurs relatively late in its flight if the detected position of the release meter is at or within the target.

20. The method of claim 17 wherein the break on the baseball pitch will result in the pitch being outside of a batter character's strike zone when the detected position of the release meter has passed the target.

21. The method of claim 17 wherein the target comprises a target zone.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein a range of the target zone is variable.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein the range of the target zone is varied based on performance statistics of the pitcher character.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein the range of the target zone is varied based on a type of pitch selected by input on the user-operable controller that controls the action performed by the pitcher character.

25. In a baseball videogame, wherein animated action is performed by a pitcher character in response to input by a user provided through a user-operable controller, a method of controlling game play comprising:

receiving user input from the user-operable controller requesting a pitch by the pitcher character, the pitch having a certain amount of spin;

monitoring user input from the user-operable controller requesting an additional amount of spin to be added on the pitch; and

performing the pitch of a baseball from the pitcher character, the pitch having the certain amount of spin plus the additional amount of spin when the user input requesting an additional amount of spin has been received.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein the user input requesting an additional amount of spin indicates a level of additional spin is to be added on the pitch.

27. The method of claim 25 wherein the user input requesting an additional amount of spin is accomplished using a button on the user-operable controller as a control element for indicating a level of additional spin to be added on the pitch, the level of additional spin being directly related to a number times the button is pushed.

28. The method of claim 25 further comprising displaying one or more symbols to indicate a level of additional spin to be added on the pitch.

29. The method of claim 25, further comprising increasing a fatigue level of the pitcher character as a result of the pitcher character placing additional spin on a pitch.

30. A method of controlling game play in a baseball videogame, wherein a user interactively controls a pitcher character in response to input by a user provided through a user-operable controller, the method comprising:

receiving user input from the user-operable controller requesting a pitch by the pitcher character, the pitch having a certain amount of spin;

monitoring user input from the user-operable controller requesting an additional amount of spin to be added on the pitch; and

performing the pitch of a baseball from the pitcher character, the pitch having the certain amount of spin plus the additional amount of spin when the user input requesting an additional amount of spin has been received.

31. The method of claim 30 wherein the user input requesting an additional amount of spin indicates a level of additional spin is to be added on the pitch.

32. The method of claim 30 wherein the user input requesting an additional amount of spin is accomplished using a button on the user-operable controller as a control element for indicating a level of additional spin to be added on the pitch, the level of additional spin being directly related to a number times the button is pushed.

33. The method of claim 30 further comprising displaying one or more symbols to indicate a level of additional spin to be added on the pitch.

34. The method of claim 30 further comprising increasing a fatigue level of the pitcher character as a result of the pitcher character placing additional spin on a pitch.

35. In a baseball videogame, wherein animated action is performed by a pitcher character in response to input by a user provided through a user-operable controller, a method of controlling game play comprising:

receiving user input from the user-operable controller requesting a pitch by the pitcher character, the pitch having a certain amount of spin;

receiving another user input from the user-operable controller requesting an additional amount of spin to be added on the pitch; and

performing the pitch of a baseball from the pitcher character, the pitch having the certain amount of spin plus the additional amount of spin, an amount of break on a pitch having the certain amount of spin plus the additional amount of spin being larger than an amount of break on a pitch having only the certain amount of spin.

36. The method of claim 35 wherein the another user input requesting an additional amount of spin indicates a level of additional spin is to be added on the pitch.

37. The method of claim 35 wherein the another user input requesting an additional amount of spin is accomplished using a button on the user-operable controller as a control element for indicating a level of additional spin to be added on the pitch, the level of additional spin being directly related to a number times the button is pushed.

38. The method of claim 35 further comprising displaying one or more symbols to indicate a level of additional spin to be added on the pitch.

39. The method of claim 35 further comprising increasing a fatigue level of the pitcher character as a result of the pitcher character placing additional spin on a pitch.

40. In a sports videogame, wherein animated action may be performed by a game character in response to input from a user provided through a user-operable controller and the game character possesses the characteristics of a real-life player having a plurality of unique skills, a method of controlling game play comprising:

generating a first game play scenario presenting an opportunity for the user to control the game character to simulate performance of one of the unique skills of the real-life player;

receiving user input from the user-operable controller to control the animated action of the game character in the first game play scenario;

generating at least one additional game play scenario presenting an opportunity for the user to control the game character to simulate performance of another one of the unique skills of the real-life player; and

receiving user input from the user-operable controller to control the animated action of the game character in the additional game play scenario.

41. The method of claim 40 further comprising assigning a score based on the user's control of the game character to achieve a certain goal presented by the first game play scenario and assigning a score based on the user's control of the game character to achieve a certain goal presented by the additional game play scenario.

42. The method of claim 41 further comprising adding the scores that were assigned based on the user's control in the first and additional game play scenarios to form an accumulated score.

43. The method of claim 42 further comprising determining whether the accumulated score exceeds a threshold value.

44. The method of claim 40 further comprising generating a display of game play during the game play scenarios which continually shows a perspective from a position behind the game character.

45. The method of claim 40 further comprising generating a display of game play during the game play scenarios which continually shows a first person perspective of the game character.



46. The method of claim 40 further comprising generating sounds during game play in each of the game play scenarios that simulate what the game character would hear during virtual game play.

47. The method of claim 46 wherein the sounds include audio instruction from a teammate character.

48. The method of claim 40 wherein the sports videogame is a baseball videogame and at least one of the game play scenarios presents the opportunity for user to control the game character to simulate performance of one of the following skills in baseball: steal a base, turn a double play, and hit a home run.

49. The method of claim 41 wherein the sports videogame is a baseball videogame and the assigned scores are separate scores from runs scored during normal game play in the baseball videogame.

50. A method of controlling game play in a sports videogame, wherein a user interactively controls a game character possessing the characteristics of a real-life player having a plurality of unique skills, the method comprising:

- generating a first game play scenario which allows the user to control the game character to simulate performance of one of the unique skills of the real-life player;

- receiving user input from the user-operable controller to control action of the game character in the first game play scenario;

- generating at least one additional game play scenario which allows the user to control the game character to simulate performance of another one of the unique skills of the real-life player; and

- receiving user input from the user-operable controller to control action of the game character in the additional game play scenario.

51. The method of claim 50 further comprising assigning a score based on the user's control of the game character to achieve a certain goal presented by the first game play scenario and assigning a score based on the user's control of the game character to achieve a certain goal presented by the additional game play scenario.

52. The method of claim 51 further comprising adding the scores that were assigned based on the user's control in the first and additional game play scenarios to form an accumulated score.

53. The method of claim 52 further comprising determining whether the accumulated score exceeds a threshold value.

54. The method of claim 50 further comprising generating a display of game play during the game play scenarios which continually shows a perspective from a position behind the game character.

55. The method of claim 50 further comprising generating a display of game play during the game play scenarios which continually shows a first person perspective of the game character.

56. The method of claim 50 further comprising generating sounds during game play in each of the game play scenarios that simulate what the game character would hear during virtual game play.

57. The method of claim 56 wherein the sounds include audio instruction from a teammate character.

58. The method of claim 50 wherein the sports videogame is a baseball videogame and at least one of the game play scenarios allows the user

to control the game character to simulate performance of one of the following unique skills in baseball: steal a base, turn a double play, and hit a home run.

59. The method of claim 51 wherein the sports videogame is a baseball videogame and the assigned scores are separate scores from runs scored during normal game play in the baseball videogame.

60. In a sports videogame, wherein animated action may be performed by a game character in response to input from a user provided through a user-operable controller, a method of controlling game play comprising:

- receiving a user selection of a particular game character from among a plurality of possible game characters, each videogame character have a distinct set of unique abilities;

- generating a first game play scenario to allow the user to control the game character to perform one of the unique abilities of the selected game character;

- receiving user input from the user-operable controller to control the animated action of the game character in the first game play scenario;

- generating at least one additional game play scenario to allow the user to control the game character to perform one of the other unique abilities of the selected game character; and

- receiving user input from the user-operable controller to control the animated action of the character in the additional game play scenario.

61. The method of claim 60 further comprising assigning a score based on the user's control of the game character to achieve a certain goal presented by the first game play scenario and assigning a score based on the user's control of the game character to achieve a certain goal presented by the additional game play scenario.

62. The method of claim 61 further comprising adding the scores that were assigned based on the user's control in the first and additional game play scenarios to form an accumulated score.

63. The method of claim 62 further comprising determining whether the accumulated score exceeds a threshold value.

64. The method of claim 60 further comprising generating a display of game play during the game play scenarios which continually shows a perspective from a position behind the game character.

65. The method of claim 60 further comprising generating a display of game play during the game play scenarios which continually shows a first person perspective of the game character.

66. The method of claim 60 further comprising generating sounds during game play in each of the game play scenarios that simulate what would be heard by the game character during virtual game play.

67. The method of claim 66 wherein the sounds include audio instruction from a teammate character.

68. The method of claim 60 wherein the sports videogame is a baseball videogame and at least one of the game play scenarios allows the user to control the game character to simulate performance of one of the following abilities in baseball: steal a base, turn a double play, and hit a home run.

69. The method of claim 61 wherein the sports videogame is a baseball videogame and the assigned scores are separate scores from runs scored during normal game play in the baseball videogame.

70. In a videogame system including a user-operable controller, a method comprising:

- allowing the user to create an image using the user-operable controller during execution of a software program;

- allowing the user to select a portion of a virtual sports venue in which interactive game play of a sports videogame is to be provided;

- applying the created image onto the selected portion of the sports venue;

- displaying the sports venue having the applied created image so that the created image contributes to the overall atmosphere in which interactive game play of the sports videogame is provided; and

- providing interactive game play of the sports videogame within the sports venue in response to input received on the user-operable controller.

71. The method of claim 70 wherein the portion of the virtual sports venue onto which the user created image is applied is one of the following: a billboard, a sign, a playing surface pattern and a motion picture screen.

72. The method of claim 70 wherein the image is created by editing a preexisting image which is loaded into the videogame system.

73. The method of claim 72 wherein the preexisting image is loaded by reading data printed on a card with a card reader.

74. The method of claim 73 wherein the card reader is connected to the user-operable controller.

75. The method of claim 70 further comprising allowing the user to preview the created image, before application onto the selected portion of the sports venue, on a display screen of the user-operable controller.

76. The method of claim 70 wherein applying the created image onto the portion of the sports venue includes processing the created image to convert the created image into a texture and texture mapping the texture onto the selected portion of the sports venue.

77. The method of claim 70 further comprising animating the portion of the sports venue onto which the created image is applied so that a moving picture is simulated.

78. The method of claim 70 wherein the execution of the software program is accomplished at least in part by a processor arranged within the controller.

79. A system for playing a sports videogame comprising:  
a user-operable controller for receiving input from a user; and  
at least one processor that communicates with the user-operable controller and executes a sports videogame so that the following can be performed:

- allowing a user to create an image using the user-operable controller;

- allowing the user to select a portion of a virtual sports venue in which interactive game play of the sports videogame is to be provided;

- applying the created image onto the selected portion of the virtual sports venue;

- displaying the sports venue having the applied created image so that the created image contributes to the overall atmosphere in which interactive game play of the sports videogame is provided; and

- providing interactive game play of the sports videogame within the sports venue in response to input received on the user-operable controller.

80. The system of claim 79 wherein the portion of the virtual sports venue onto which the user created image is applied is one of the following: a billboard, a sign, a surface of the playing area and a motion picture screen.

81. The system of claim 79 wherein execution of the videogame by the processor includes downloading a program portion of the sports videogame to the controller for execution by a processor within the controller, the program portion executed by the processor within the controller allowing the user to create the image using the user-operable controller.

82. The system of claim 79 further comprising a card reader connected to the controller for reading cards, the cards providing image data which may be edited by input on the user-operable controller to allow the user to create the image using the user-operable controller.

83. The system of claim 79 wherein the user-operable controller includes a display that shows a preview of the created image.

84. The system of claim 79 wherein allowing the user to create an image includes loading a preexisting the image to the system and allowing the user to edit the preexisting image using the user-operable controller.

85. The system of claim 79 wherein applying the created image onto the portion of the sports venue includes processing the created image to convert the created image into a texture and texture mapping the texture onto the selected portion of the sports venue.

86. The system of claim 79 further comprising animating the portion of the sports venue onto which the created image is applied so that a moving picture is simulated.

87. A method of controlling game play in a sports videogame, wherein the user interactively controls a game character in a virtual sports venue using a user-operable controller, the method comprising:

applying a user generated image onto a user selected portion of the sports venue;

receiving user input from the user-operable controller requesting an animated action be performed by the game character; and

displaying the performance of the animated action within the sports venue having the applied, user generated image so that the user generated image contributes to the overall atmosphere in which the animated action is performed.

88. The method of claim 87 wherein the selected portion of the virtual sports venue onto which the user generated image is applied is one of the following: a billboard, a sign, a surface of the playing surface area and a motion picture screen.

89. The method of claim 87 wherein the user generated image is generated by editing a preexisting image.

90. The method of claim 89 wherein the preexisting image is loaded into the videogame by reading data printed on a card with a card reader.

91. The method of claim 90 wherein the card reader is connected to the user-operable controller.

92. The method of claim 87 further comprising allowing the user to preview the user generated image on a display screen housed within the user-operable controller.



93. The method of claim 87 wherein applying the user generated image onto the selected portion of the sports venue includes processing the user generated image to convert the user generated image into a texture and texture mapping the texture onto the selected portion of the sports venue.

94. The method of claim 87 further comprising animating the user selected portion of the sports venue onto which the user generated image is applied so that a moving picture is simulated.

95. In a videogame system including a user-operable controller, a method of allowing a user to incorporate a user generated audio message into game play of a videogame, the method comprising:

receiving and storing an audio message from the user;

detecting input from the user-operable controller indicating a particular event that may occur in game play of the videogame; and

playing the stored audio message during game play of the videogame if and when the particular event in game play occurs.

96. The method of claim 95 further comprising displaying a menu screen listing a plurality of game play events so that the detected input from the user-operable controller indicating the particular event is a selection of one of the game play events listed on the menu screen.

97. The method of claim 95 further comprising receiving the audio message from the user through a microphone.

98. The method of claim 95 further comprising receiving the audio message from the user through a microphone connected to the user-operable controller as part of the videogame system.

99. The method of claim 95 wherein receiving and storing the audio message and detecting the input indicating a particular event in game play is completed before interactive game play of the videogame begins.

100. A system for playing a videogame comprising:  
a microphone for receiving an audio message from a user, the received audio message being stored in a storage device;  
a user-operable controller for receiving input indicating a particular event that may occur in game play of the videogame; and  
at least one processor for processing data relating to the audio message and the input indicating the particular event, and generating an output signal to play the audio message during game play of the videogame if and when the particular event in game play occurs.

101. The system of claim 100 wherein the processor generates a menu display screen listing a plurality of game play events so that the input received on the user-operable controller indicating the particular event is a selection of one of the game play events listed on the menu display screen.

102. The system of claim 100 wherein the microphone is connected to the user-operable controller.

103. A method of allowing a user to incorporate a recorded audio message into game play of a videogame, the method comprising:  
allowing a user to record an audio message;  
enabling storage of the audio message in a storage device;  
allowing the user to select a particular game play event from a screen listing a plurality of possible game play events; and  
enabling playback of the recorded audio message during game play of the videogame if and when the selected game play event occurs.